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SUBJECT: DIYALA PRT: DIYALA PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT TACKLES
FOOD DISTRIBUTION PROBLEM

This is a Diyala PRT Reporting Cable

¶1. (SBU) SUMMARY: Largely due to the security situation, Diyala province has not received its Public Distribution System (PDS) food shipment from the Ministry of Trade (MoT) since September 2006. This has been a major contributor to the public perception that the provincial (and national) government is failing the people; however, there are not reports of Iraqi citizens suffering from food shortages.. The Diyala provincial government, with the support of the PRT and BCT, has worked out a tentative solution to this problem with the MoT in Baghdad. The local PDS distribution agents from each Qada (district) in Diyala will be able to go directly to a MoT warehouse outside of the province. The Embassy is working with the PRT to confirm that MoT has indeed agreed to, and is moving to implement such a plan. In Diyala PRT/BCT will work to confirm that agents and trucks (and possible IA convoys) are available, and that there is some management system in place in the province to monitor the success of this endeavor. Diyala PRT will report promptly on implementation.

END
SUMMARY

Provincial Government Solves a Problem (maybe)

¶2. (SBU) While the province is not on the brink of starvation nor facing a threat of food riots, the five month delay in PDS shipments is causing hardship for the people, and is a significant contributor to the public perception that the provincial (and national) governments are failures. The provincial government, PRT and BCT have undertaken significant efforts to correct this situation. In a recent meeting organized by the Prime Minister in Baghdad the Assistant Governor for Administrative Affairs Hafith al-Jubouri (Sunni, Iraqi Islamic Party), who has been tasked with resolving this issue, worked out a deal to allow each of Diyala's five Qadas (districts) to get PDS supplies directly from warehouses in other provinces, rather than using the central Baqubah warehouse. The Baqubah warehouse has been problematic because the roads between Baghdad and Baqubah, and from Baqubah to the other parts of Diyala have been too dangerous for drivers to transport the foodstuffs.

¶3. (SBU) The PDS food items for the Qadas should all be distributed to Ministry of Trade (MoT), which runs PDS, warehouses in Baghdad (Khalis Qada), Wassit (Balad Ruz Qada), or Kirkuk (Khanaqin, Baqubah, and Muqdadiyah Qadas). MoT is supposed to send official notices to the warehouses allowing the distribution agents from those Qadas to go directly to the MoT warehouse and pick up shipments. Baghdad will also be transferring the appropriate records to those warehouses so that the agents who come will be tracked. Moreover, the MoT and the PM's

office also informed the Assistant Governor that Diyala,s grain shipments would be changed so that already processed flour would be put in with the other items in the food basket, as opposed to the complicated procedure of shipping grain into the province, processing it, and then distributing it. If this solution works out as planned, then the Qadas should begin getting their food shipments in the next few weeks.

14. (SBU) There is also a reported plan to get some of the goods for the shipments intended for Diyala for SEP-DEC 2006. This effort is being organized by the Diyala Director General for PDS distribution and an independent actor who can coordinate trucking the shipments to Baqubah since some of the goods from the PDS basket intended for Diyala are still in warehouses in Baghdad. As MoT/Diyala have already set aside funds for these shipments, it becomes a matter of acquiring a MoT contract with a new trucking firm to ship the goods to Baqubah. COMMENT: This is a new aspect to the plan which was just added to the realignment worked out in Baghdad. END COMMENT.

Moving Forward, USG Support

15. (SBU) The next step is to confirm that this account, which comes from the Diyala Assistant Governor, is indeed a plan agreed upon by all parties. PRT requests that Baghdad with MoT that shares this understanding of the plan as well. PRT/BCT will report promptly on the results in Diyala.

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Comment: A Possible Success Story

16. (SBU) COMMENT: While it is still too early to tell whether this plan will succeed, if it does, it will be a fine example of the Diyala provincial government tackling a major problem for the province, and coordinating a relatively complex solution, a capacity that it has often failed to demonstrate of late. If the provincial government was able to negotiate this plan with a Baghdad government, it would certainly be a step forward, given that the central government is often seen as removed from the province and its problems.
KHALILZAD